**Readers: Five ways to motivate students**

Posted By Meris Stansbury On July 13, 2012 @ 1:13 pm In eClassroom News,School Reform Opinion,Top News | [No Comments](http://www.eschoolnews.com/2012/07/13/readers-five-ways-to-motivate-students/print/#comments_controls)

[](http://www.eschoolnews.com/2012/07/13/readers-five-ways-to-motivate-students/motivation2resized/)[1]

“Students need to know that someone truly cares about them when they are in a classroom,” said one reader.

We recently highlighted a report from the Center on Education Policy that looked at how schools can [motivate students](http://www.eschoolnews.com/2012/06/07/how-can-schools-better-motivate-students/) [2]. Now, here are some of the best ideas from our readers.

We asked readers: “What are some ways/tactics/activities you implement to motivate students?” Their advice ranged from “be there for your students and let them know you care about them,” to “entice them with technology they use with their friends.”

Here are five of the best responses (some comments have been edited for brevity). What do you think of these ideas? Do you have any stories of your own for how to motivate and engage today’s 21st-century learners? Be sure to leave them in the comments section!

[](http://www.eschoolnews.com/2012/07/13/readers-five-ways-to-motivate-students/socialneworking300/)[3]

**1. Give them access to Web 2.0 tools.**

“Like many school librarians and classroom teachers, I **capitalize on 21st-century students’ internal motivation to be producers of ideas and information who create for authentic audiences** (especially their friends!). [Here] are three ways educators can stimulate these components of student motivation: (1) Integrating Web 2.0 tools into the learning process through mind-mapping or storyboarding; (2) Viewing, deconstructing, and evaluating electronic media in preparation for creating students’ own media; (3) Producing software- or Web 2.0 tools-facilitated final products to demonstrate learning.

“When school librarians and classroom teachers co-plan and co-teach these technology-infused lessons, individual students and small groups get more support for developing their creativity, communicating their knowledge, and presenting their understandings in the electronic world—the world that matters most to students themselves.” —*Judi Moreillon, M.L.S., Ph.D., assistant professor, School of Library and Information Studies, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas*

[](http://www.eschoolnews.com/2012/07/13/readers-five-ways-to-motivate-students/communicatingstudents300-2/)[4]

**2. Put them in charge of their own learning.**

“Hands down, the best environment to stimulate intrinsic motivation is PBL (problem-based learning)—**a student-centered pedagogy in which students learn about a subject in the context of complex, multifaceted, and realistic problems** (not to be confused with [project-based learning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project-based_learning) [5])!

“Dan Pink, in his book, [*Drive*,](http://www.danpink.com/drive) [6] identifies three elements of environments that will stimulate intrinsic motivation (extrinsic motivation, or carrots [and] sticks, don’t work): autonomy, mastery, and purpose. For PBL, autonomy comes through student control of the projects, mastery is encouraged through the need … to address the project, and purpose comes from the choice of real-world project areas interesting to students—especially with student choice of specifics.” —*John Bennett, emeritus professor/associate dean, University of Connecticut, Coventry, Conn.*

[](http://www.eschoolnews.com/2012/07/13/readers-five-ways-to-motivate-students/coaching300/)[7]

**3. Explore team-building using peer knowledge.**

“At Drake University, we’ve just established a coach-faculty exchange program called ‘Coaching in the Classroom.’ This summer, six head coaches from our Division I athletics programs in men’s and women’s basketball, men’s soccer, women’s golf, and football are collaborating with six faculty members from Education, English, Musical Theatre, Marketing, Statistics, and Chemistry to explore ways of **using strategies for team-building and accountability deployed by coaches to motivate active, engaged, and collaborative learning.**

“After a series of summer meetings, coaches will visit classrooms in the fall and faculty members will observe practices, locker-room sessions, and games, in the hopes of sharing insights into the way coaching strategies can be transferred to the classroom and pedagogy can aid coaches on the gridiron, course, and court. Participants in this program, coordinated by the university’s athletic director and faculty development coordinator, use their own experiences, as well as literature from teaching and coaching theory, to refine their approach to motivating student participation and engagement. Our findings will be presented to the campus community during a plenary workshop in spring 2013.” —*Craig N. Owens, PhD., associate professor of English, Academic Affairs fellow, and director of the Center for the Humanities at Drake University*

[](http://www.eschoolnews.com/2012/07/13/readers-five-ways-to-motivate-students/volunteer300-2/)[8]

**4. Inspire and empower them to be leaders in their community.**

“Here at University Middle School … in Greeley, Colo., I have been working in conjunction with our school director on a **‘leadership’ class in 8th grade to help students establish an understanding of their responsibilities and roles in being a leader in their school community.** Last year was our first year for this class. As a result, six of our 8th graders, who are now moving on to our high school, have been motivated to create a high school committee called ‘University of Leadership.’ This group of passionate and dedicated high schoolers are willing to work through the summer on their own time, with me as their sponsor, to put together opportunities at our K-12 school that allow students to connect with their school community and the world-at-large in a leadership capacity.

“They are proudly calling their program launching year, the 2012-13 school year, the ‘Year of the Leader.’ They are doing posters, bulletin boards, monthly teacher/student newsletters (complete with monthly themed leadership articles, posters, data, surveys, lesson plans and activities for teachers, guest editorials from leaders in our community, and much more), classroom presentations and school-wide assemblies (as well as promoting their program through social media) in an effort to make it known that they are concerned for societies’ well-being. They will be partnering with local businesses, and their future goals are to go to other schools to help students launch their own ‘Universities of Leadership.’ Feel free to follow them on Facebook and Twitter; you can see their group-created mission statement and group profile: University of Leadership and ‘Year of the Leader!’” —*Tonya Van Beber*

[](http://www.eschoolnews.com/2012/07/13/readers-five-ways-to-motivate-students/studentfriends300/)[9]

**5. Get to know your students and build relationships.**

“In my more than 25 years in education, one thing that continues to resonate is relationship building. Whether it is with adults or students, people want to know and feel that they are valued. While this is often mentioned in the research, it is something that is unique to each teacher and student, just as each person is unique.

“In particular, I recall two students in which my relationship with them made a difference during their year in my middle school classroom. In one instance, a student entered my class at the beginning of the year with a very bad stutter and faced going to juvenile court in the first month of school as a result of domestic violence in his home. The student struggled throughout the year, but I remained flexible and open to meeting the needs of the student by being available after school and during lunch, and frequently touching base during the day. As he settled into my class, his stuttering started to decrease—and by the spring … he was even able to make an oral presentation to the class. I feel that he ended the year successfully despite the challenges he faced in his personal life, [owing] to the caring adults [who] reached out to him that year to support him.

“In the other instance, a student entered middle school with an IEP (Individualized Education Program) and extreme emotional issues. His teachers were very sensitive to those issues while they continued to try to support his adjustment to middle school. We communicated frequently with his parents and made ourselves available to work with him one-on-one. However, nothing seemed to work. Pretty drastic measures were developed, which included that the student would stay after school with his individual teachers on a regular schedule, and one of his parents would ensure that the student showed up in that teacher’s classroom. Working with this student one-on-one after school, his teachers were able to develop a different relationship with him.

“On one occasion, … he and I had a conversation about a performance assessment he was working on that involved art/drawing skills. He explained why he was doing what he was doing and started to talk about his work in a very animated way. After several after-school discussions with him, he started to take more interest in his work and even to ask questions of clarification and for help. One of those discussions involved helping him review for a unit test. Once he took the test, he asked me every time I saw him if I had graded [it] yet and how he had done. When grading the test after school one day, I was quite surprised to find that he had done well and scored an 87% on it. I talked to his mom, who then passed the phone to him and I gave him the good news. He was so excited! His whole attitude towards his school changed, because he realized that we really wanted to help him succeed. I am pleased to say that he passed my class for the year because he completed several performance assessments that included content that he had previously failed.

“**Students need to know that someone truly cares about them when they are in a classroom. They need to feel comfortable enough to take risks and understand that it is OK to make mistakes.** Teachers need to be flexible and open when establishing relationships with their students yet holding high expectations.” —*Alice L. Reilly, Ed.S., coordinator, preK-12 social studies, Office of PreK-12 Curriculum & Instruction, Fairfax County Public Schools, Va.*

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[5] project-based learning: **http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project-based\_learning**

[6] *Drive*,: **http://www.danpink.com/drive**

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